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Senator Dianne Feinstein

of California

Senate Energy Committee Approves Bill to Improve the Irvine Basin's Water Supply February 12, 2004

Washington, DC – The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources has approved legislation sponsored in the Senate by Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) that would fund three projects to improve water quality and increase water supply in the Irvine Basin. The House of Representatives approved companion legislation sponsored by Congressman Christopher Cox (R-Calif.) last October.

“Water is an issue of paramount importance in California, and these projects provide innovative examples of ways that we can improve our water quality and increase our water supply,” Senator Feinstein said. **“Meeting the West’s water needs will require comprehensive solutions that allow for both increased conservation and increased supply. These projects show us a promising way forward.”**

Specifically, the bill authorizes up to \$19 million through the Bureau of Reclamation for study and construction of three water projects including:

- **SURFACE WATER** - The first project, called the Natural Treatment System, will build a network of wetlands to filter surface water and urban runoff in the San Diego Creek Watershed and Upper Newport Bay. Based on the performance of a single constructed wetland in the area, it is expected that the Natural Treatment System will filter out 126,000 pounds of nitrogen and 21,000 pounds of phosphorous from the watershed each year and reduce levels of harmful bacteria(such as fecal coliform) by as much as 26%.
- **GROUNDWATER** - The second project, the Irvine desalter, will clean brackish groundwater and provide drinking water for between 20,000 and 40,000 people. By allowing the Irvine Basin to access another water source, the desalter will reduce dependence on imported water and take considerable pressure off of our other water resources, including the Colorado River. The Irvine Company has already donated the land necessary to build the desalter.
- **BRINE DISPOSAL** - The final project will construct a regional brine line to dispose of brine directly into the ocean. Like much of California, the Irvine Ranch Water District is a leader in water reclamation and recycling efforts. However, buildup of too much salt in the system can hamper these reclamation efforts. The brine line will allow the Water District to maximize conservation and recycling efforts while utilizing a new water source.

The Federal share cannot exceed 25 percent of the total cost of the project. No funds could be used for operations or maintenance of the projects.

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